

The President's Daily Brief

24 August 1973



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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS



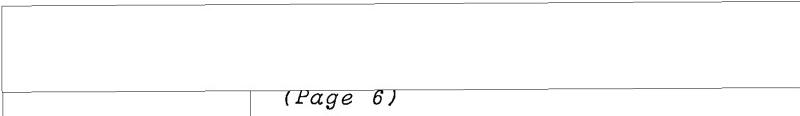
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The appearance of a new Soviet fighter regiment near the Chinese border is the latest sign that Moscow is continuing to add gradually to its strength along the frontier. (Page 2)

An intercepted message shows that the insurgents plan to attack near Phnom Penh this weekend, but they already have doubts as to how long they will be able to remain on the offensive. (Page 3)

Looking toward a fall visit by President Nixon, some EC countries, particularly Italy and West Germany, are trying to hasten the pace of negotiations to work out community positions without provoking the French. (Page 4)

Recent criticism of Bonn's policies by French Agriculture Minister Chirac has strained Franco-German relations, and is having repercussions on the West German political scene. (Page 5)



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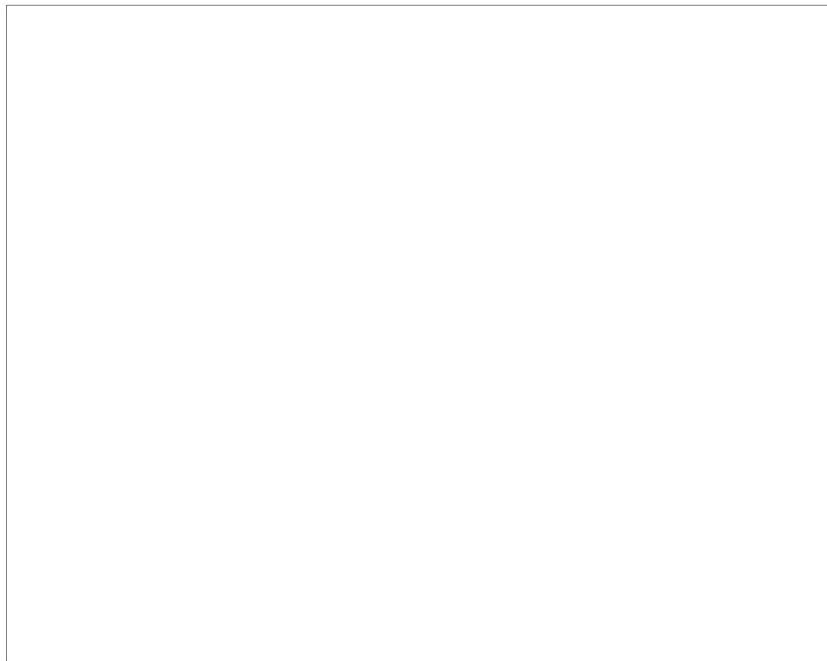
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UN Secretary General Waldheim sounds more bullish on prospects for his visit to the Middle East next week than the evidence suggests he should be. (Page 7)

Notes on developments yesterday in Chile and Laos appear on Page 8.

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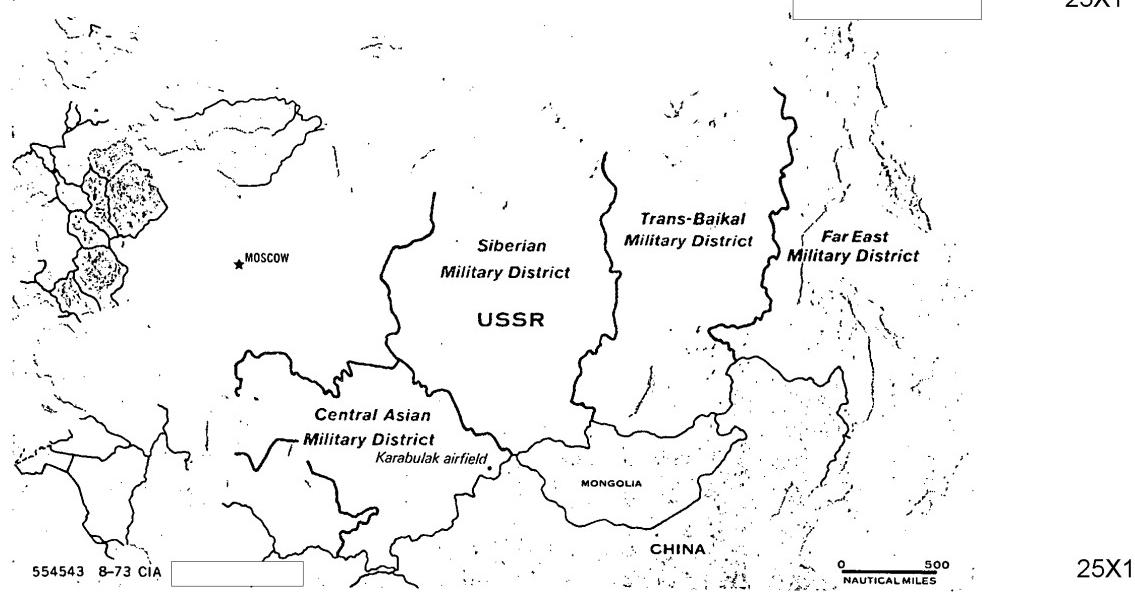


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New Soviet Fighter Regiment Near Chinese Border

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USSR-CHINA

The Soviets are continuing to add gradually to
their strength on the frontier.

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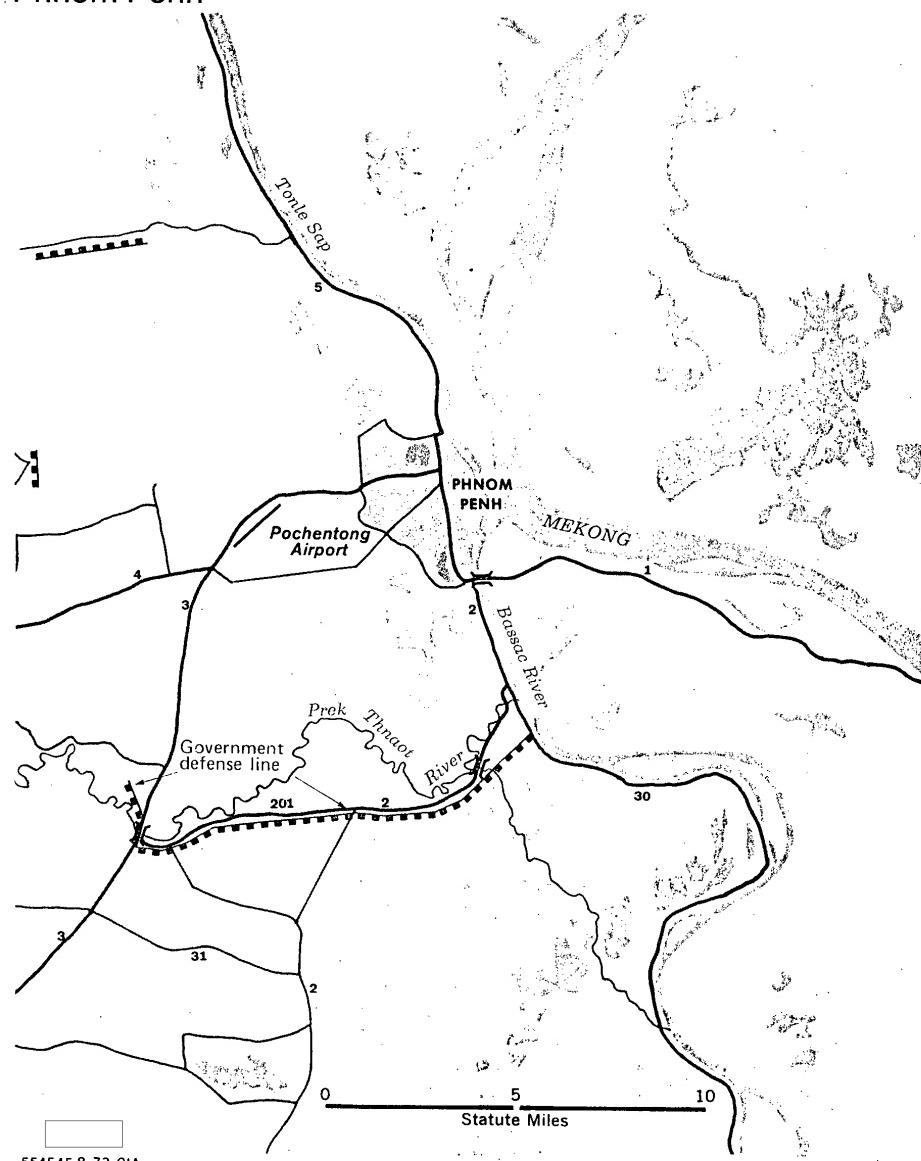
[redacted] a MIG-17
regiment at an airfield under construction in the
Central Asian Military District about 40 miles from
the Chinese border.

This is the first additional fighter regi-
ment sent to the border since August 1972.

As for ground forces, the emphasis is still
on fleshing out units already there. The
Soviets added one division in early 1972,
but no significant reinforcement has been
detected since then.

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Phnom Penh



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CAMBODIA

The insurgents plan to go on the offensive in the area of the capital this weekend, but they already have doubts as to how long they will be able to sustain the fight. An intercepted message of August 22 shows that rebel commanders have agreed to launch initial attacks on August 25. Although no specific targets were mentioned, the insurgents apparently intend to implement earlier plans to resume fighting along Routes 2, 3, and 4 and in the Mekong River corridor below Phnom Penh.

A major coordinated effort of this kind may be too ambitious, however, and some slippage is likely. Units on the southern front took heavy casualties during the final US bombing and have had little time to recover. Sizable shipments of ammunition and supplies have arrived since the bombing halt, but intercepted messages suggest that flooding has hindered distribution.

The August 22 message added that "during the 15 days of fighting, there will be two meetings to decide whether to stop or continue." This suggests that the insurgent leaders anticipate problems and foresee a need to reassess the situation after the initial attacks.

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WESTERN EUROPE - US

Looking toward a fall visit by President Nixon, some EC countries--Italy and West Germany, in particular--are trying to hasten the pace of negotiations aimed at working out community positions. They seem to appreciate that serious attempts to achieve consensus will take time, however. The French continue to argue that at this stage only bilateral talks with the US are possible.

While NATO discusses a draft declaration focusing on defense and security matters, the Nine are getting ready for a foreign ministers meeting on September 10-11 at which they will try to agree on a list of topics the community might take up with the President. [redacted] most of the Nine would like to go further and establish "European" positions at the September session.

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They are aware, however, that if they press too early and too hard, the French in particular will get their backs up. They also want to avoid giving any support to the charge that in encouraging timely action, the US wants to "dictate" to the Europeans.

EC working groups will hold meetings beginning at the end of August in preparation for the September ministerial. Presumably these will give the various capitals a better feel for how much the ministerial is likely to accomplish.

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WEST GERMANY - FRANCE

The recent criticism of Bonn's policies by French Agriculture Minister Chirac has strained Franco-German relations and is having repercussions on the West German political scene.

Chirac's charge last week that West Germany is "turning away from Europe," has led opposition party leaders in Bonn to warn that the country is drifting toward neutralism. Their spokesmen, led by Christian Democratic parliamentary leader Karl Carstens, have also questioned whether the Brandt government, in its preoccupation with Ostpolitik, is paying adequate attention to Western Europe.

The US Embassy reports that the government's initial reaction to both Chirac's charges and its domestic critics was restrained. Brandt and other government officials, however, privately expressed displeasure and anger, and German officials are now sharply rebutting the charges. Brandt reportedly made a heated defense of his European policies during a meeting with Carstens on Tuesday. He also instructed the Foreign Office to make known his displeasure to the French. This was done in Bonn and in Paris. A meeting between the French ambassador and a senior Foreign Office official was described as quite unpleasant.

West German officials now are publicly questioning Chirac's sincerity, and are generally distrustful of French policies. Their view of l'Affaire Chirac was best expressed by a Foreign Office spokesman who said that if there is a problem about European integration, "it is a French problem." He also stated that the other EC countries were prepared to compromise "whereas France frequently held back and made it difficult, for itself and also for us."

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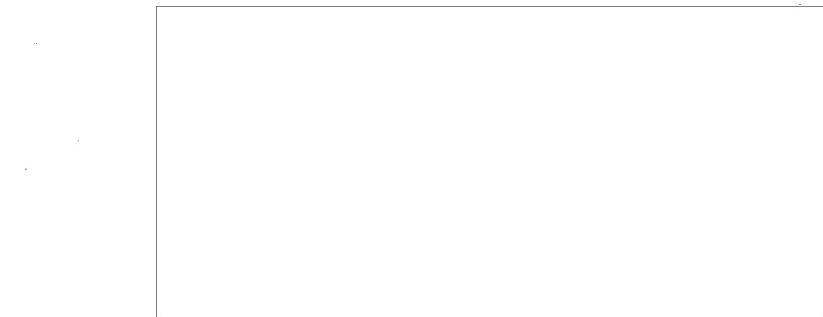
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UN - MIDDLE EAST

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Secretary General Waldheim recently told [redacted] that he would take an activist approach during his visit to the Middle East next week. Waldheim said that, although his trip resulted from an Egyptian suggestion, the Israelis had told him that they too wanted progress. The Secretary General said he might suggest to both sides that they begin talks under the "Rhodes formula," a procedure designed to circumvent the perennial impasse of whether negotiations should be direct or indirect.

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Soundings taken by State Department officers among Arab delegates at the UN showed little enthusiasm for indirect negotiations so long as Israel continues to hold the occupied territories. The delegates professed to see little hope for a breakthrough of any kind during Waldheim's visit.

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NOTES

Chile: General Prats' resignation as Minister of Defense and army commander in chief has increased tension in Santiago and is bound to worry those within the government who value the role he has played in preventing a military coup.

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[redacted] The other members of the cabinet have also resigned. Allende accepted Prats' resignation, but reportedly refused to accept the others. More changes in the cabinet seem likely soon, however.

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Laos: At the joint meeting of the cabinet and senior Lao military commanders yesterday, the rightists objected again to various aspects of the draft agreement negotiated by Prime Minister Souvanna. Souvanna branded some of their demands unrealistic and unobtainable, but reluctantly agreed to make another attempt to achieve an agreement more satisfactory to them. The inconclusive outcome of the meeting, which had earlier been billed by Souvanna as a showdown with his rightist critics, means still further delay in reaching a final settlement.

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